

Seventh graders' perceptions of physical education courses*

Mustafa KOÇ¹, İbrahim ŞAHİN²

¹Adiyaman University, School of Physical Education and Sports, Adiyaman, Turkey.

²Aksaray University, School of Physical Education and Sports, Aksaray, Turkey.

*The paper presented orally at The International Journal of Arts & Sciences (IJAS) International Conference for Education. (29 November-02 December 2016), Freiburg, Germany.

Address Correspondence to M, Koç, e-mail: mustafakoc.7483@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aims at determining eighth graders' views and thoughts of physical education courses in primary education schools through metaphors. The study group was composed of 58 students attending Altınşehir Primary Education school located in Adiyaman in the 2014-2015 academic year. The data were collected by asking each student to complete the sentence "physical education course is like..... because". In consequence, 24 metaphors created by 58 students were divided into four different categories – namely, (i) social development, (ii) physical development, (iii) psychological development, and (iv) mental development. The majority of the students (98.28%) were found to have created positive metaphors for the course while only 1.72% of them were found to have created negative metaphors.

Key Words: physical education, metaphor.

INTRODUCTION

One of the fundamental principles of education is to raise individuals as a whole with their mental and physical aspects. Undoubtedly, the availability of physically and psychologically pleased individuals is a prerequisite for community development. Therefore, the course of physical education has such purposes as instilling in students healthy activity habits and sustaining appropriate physical fitness all through life (11).

The primary purpose of physical education courses in primary education schools is to inform children of their development, skills and abilities – which is a result of participation in physical activities throughout life. In their participation, it is necessary to equip children with suitable experiences to help them meet their needs. Individuals have social and emotional needs in addition to physical needs. Children's basic motor skills should be developed and thus their developmental needs should be met by varying the professional experiences (4).

Physical education is the process of causing intentional changes (physical, emotional and mental changes) in individuals' behaviours fitting the goals of physical education by participating in physical

activities. As different from other fields of education, "learning activities and learning through activities" are considered essential in physical education (14).

While the word metaphor – for the word "metapherein" in ancient Greek language – originally meant "transporting" or "transferring", it is today used in the meaning of parallelism/similarity between two objects, events or relations (6). A metaphor is the description of a concept, situation or object by means of another concept or object rather than by the concept, situation or object itself, in an indirect way (5).

Metaphors are one of the most important instruments in trying to partly comprehend what we cannot comprehend as a whole, our emotions, our aesthetic experiences, our moral practices and our psychological consciousness (3). Metaphors facilitate one to tell what one wishes to tell in fewer words and in a more emphatic way. They lead individuals to think in a more creative way, to imagine and to give meaning in their life, and at the same time they make individuals more creative by preventing individuals from limitation, and thus enable those individuals to find themselves in the depths of their language (16). Metaphors are among

the basic tools that humans developed to understand, express, build and arrange their own world (5).

Students stick their new knowledge to the sky present in their mind and thus tie it to their previous knowledge through metaphors. In this way, metaphors set up strong connections between students' previous learning and personal experiences and newly learnt concepts, they create vivid images and thus increase the quality of the learning process (2).

Purpose

This study aims to exhibit seventh graders' perceptions of the concept of "physical education course" through metaphors. In order to serve to this general purpose, answers were sought to the following questions:

1. With which metaphors do seventh graders describe their perceptions of the course of physical education?
2. Under what categories can the metaphors offered by the students in relation to the course of physical education be listed?

MATERIALS & METHODS

Research Design

This research employs a phenomenological design, a method of qualitative research. Phenomenological design focuses on phenomena which we have no deep understanding and detailed insight. Phenomenology forms a basis to research phenomena which are not completely unfamiliar to us but which we cannot fully understand (18).

Study Group

The study group was composed of 58 seventh graders who were attending Altınşehir Primary Education school located in Adiyaman in the 2014-2015 academic year and who were randomly chosen.

Data Collection

For data collection purposes, the students attending Altınşehir primary education school in the 2014-2015 academic year were asked to complete the sentence "physical education course is like..... because". In this way, the metaphors that students had in relation to the concept of "physical education course" were determined, and then the metaphors were divided into categories and thus students' perceptions of the course of physical education were identified.

Data Analysis

The analyses of the data were based on the article by Saban (12) entitled "Mental images which Primary School Stage One Teachers and Students Have in Relation to the Concept of Knowledge". Accordingly, seventh graders' metaphors were analysed and interpreted at four stages: 1. Naming, 2. Elimination and purifying, 3. Compiling and categorising, and 4. Attaining validity and reliability.

At the stage of naming, the metaphors created were listed in alphabetical order, and they were checked if they were really metaphors or not.

At the stage of elimination and purifying, the metaphors created by the students were examined again, and 13 forms which did not contain a source of metaphor and which did not have explanations were removed and thus true metaphors were reached.

At the stage of compiling and categorising, the metaphors were first divided into groups of positive and negative metaphors, then they were divided into four categories according to their features in common in relation to the concept of "physical education course". The sample explanations made by students were also given beside the metaphors.

At the stage of attaining validity and reliability, expert opinion was consulted so as to check whether or not the metaphors listed under the 4 categories were representative of the categories. For our purposes, two experts were given the following two lists:

1. A list of 24 metaphors created by the seventh graders in alphabetical order,
2. A list of 4 categories formed by the researcher and the properties of the categories.

The experts were asked to match the metaphors with the categories by using the two lists. After that, the lists formed by the experts and by the researcher were compared. At the end of the comparison, it was found that the experts and the researcher agreed on 22 metaphors but that they disagreed on the metaphors of water and walking in the rain. Then, the research reliability was calculated by using Miles and Huberman's (10) formula of [Reliability: agreement/agreement +disagreement] (12). In case of 90% or above concordance between experts and researchers the desired reliability is attained in qualitative research (12). According to

the formula suggested by Miles and Huberman, the research reliability was calculated as $22 / (22+2) : 0.92$.

FINDINGS

The metaphors created by the seventh graders in relation to the concept of “physical education course” are shown in tables, and they interpreted by analysing them in sub-headings.

The Metaphors Created by Seventh Graders in Relation to the Concept of “Physical Education Course”

The metaphors created by the students are listed in alphabetical order, and the number of students as well as percentages representing each metaphors are shown under this heading.

Seventh Graders’ Perceptions of the Concept of Physical Education Course

Table 1. Metaphors Created for the Concept of Physical Education Course, and the number and Percentages of students Representing the Metaphors

Categories	Codes	Students representing the metaphors		Codes in total		
		(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)	
Positive metaphors	1	Wisdom	1	1.72	57	98.28
	2	Knowledge	1	1.72		
	3	Course	2	3.44		
	4	Entertainment	14	24.08		
	5	Development	1	1.72		
	6	Wearing nice clothes	1	1.72		
	7	Beauty	2	3.44		
	8	Movement	1	1.72		
	9	Developing movements	1	1.72		
	10	Rescuer	1	1.72		
	11	Game	7	12.04		
	12	Learning	1	1.72		
	13	Teaching	1	1.72		
	14	Liberty	2	3.44		
	15	Self-confidence	1	1.72		
	16	Relaxing	5	8.6		
	17	Healthy life	2	3.44		
	18	Freedom	1	1.72		
	19	Water	1	1.72		
	20	Sport	5	8.6		
	21	Body building	4	6.8		
	22	Talking to the body	1	1.72		
	23	Walking in the rain	1	1.72		
Negative metaphors	24	Idle classes	1	1.72	1	1.72

According to Table 1, totally 24 metaphors were created in relation to the concept of physical education course by 58 seventh graders. The data showed that 1.72 students created one metaphor. The great majority (98.28%) of the metaphors created caused positive connotations while 1.72% caused negative connotations. Thus, the data demonstrated that students had positive attitudes towards physical education course. It is evident from the Table that the students used the metaphors of entertainment (24.08), game (12.04), sport (8.6), and relaxing (8.6) most. Those metaphors showed in general that students enjoyed physical education classes and they attended the classes with pleasure.

The Categories of Metaphors Students Used In Relation to the Concept of “Physical Education Course”

The metaphors created by the students were divided into categories, and the number and percentages of students representing the categories and the metaphors are shown under this heading.

Table 2. Positive Metaphors Created for the Concept of Physical Education Course, and the number and Percentages of students Representing Them

Categories	Codes	Metaphors	Sample student explanations	Students representing the metaphors			
				(f)	(%)	Codes in total	
						(f)	(%)
Social development	23	Walking in the rain	I have fun with my friends	1	1.72	10	17.2
	11	Game	We play nice games. We play enjoyable games.	7	12.04		
	7	Beauty	We do not get bored.	2	3.44		
Physical development	21	Body building	It helps to build your body	4	6.8	11	18.92
	22	Talking to the body	We live in a healthy way	1	1.72		
	6	Wearing nice clothes	Very healthy, our body becomes beautiful	1	1.72		
	9	A method of self-development	We develop the texture of our body	1	1.72		
	17	Healthy life	We become healthy	2	3.44		
	8	Movement	It is a very active course	1	1.72		
	5	Development	Our arms and legs are strengthened	1	1.72		
	19	Water	Time passes by quickly	1	1.72		
Psychological development	16	Relaxing	The stress relief and the fatigue of the lessons is taken in this time.	5	8.6	25	43.0
	18	Freedom	You are free to the course very enjoyable	1	1.72		
	4	Entertainment	We play the game we want / do sports so much funny	14	24.08		
	10	Rescuer	Recovers from the lessons are collapsed on us	1	1.72		
	14	Liberty	The stress relief and the fatigue of the lessons is taken in this time.	2	3.44		
	15	Self-confidence	I feel comfortable	1	1.72		
Mental development	1	Wisdom	Physical education course improves my intelligence	1	1.72	11	18,92
	3	Course	We are having a class	2	3.44		
	12	Learning	we learn new things	1	1.72		
	20	Sport	We are learning the branches of sport	5	8.6		
	2	Knowledge	We learn everything about sport	1	1.72		
	13	Teaching	It teaches us our body	1	1.72		

According to Table 2, students used the metaphors of entertainment (24.08), relaxing (8.6) and liberty (3.44) most in the category of psychological development to refer to the goals of physical education course. Apart from those metaphors, they also used the metaphors of water, freedom, rescuer and self-confidence for the contribution of physical education course to psychological development.

The students used the metaphors of sport (8.6) and course (2.44) most in the category of mental development. Apart from those, they also used the

metaphors of wisdom, knowledge and teaching to state contributions to mental development.

The participants used the metaphors of body building (6.8) and healthy life (3.44) most in the category of physical development. Apart from those metaphors, they also used the metaphors of talking to the body, wearing nice clothes, method of self-development, movement and development to state contributions to physical development.

They used the metaphors of game (12.04) and beauty (3.44) most in the category of social development.

Table 3. Negative Metaphors Created for the Concept of Physical Education Course, and the number and Percentages of students Representing the Metaphors

Categories	Codes	Metaphors	Sample student explanations	Students representing the metaphors			
				(f)	(%)	Codes in total	
						(f)	(%)
Negative attitudes	24	Idle classes	We play boring games	1	1.72	1	1.72

According to the Table, the students who created negative metaphors (1.72) thought that they

did nothing but played boring games in physical education classes.

CONCLUSION and DISCUSSION

Although there are several studies concerning metaphors, there are only limited numbers of studies on what physical education and sport – which occupy an important place in education – mean to children.

This study aimed to exhibit how seventh graders conceptualised their thoughts on the course of physical education by means of metaphors.

Students are generally more interested in physical education classes than in other classes, and they have positive attitudes towards the course (8). The fact that 98.28% of the participants in this research had positive perceptions of the course of physical education with their use of such metaphors as wisdom, knowledge, course, entertainment, development, wearing nice clothes, beauty, movement, self-development, rescuer, game, learning, teaching, liberty, self-confidence, relaxing, water, sport, body building, talking to the body and walking in the rain; and that only 1.72% of them had negative perceptions of the course with their use of the metaphor of idle classes is supportive of the view stated above.

The desire for movement and game- which are children's natural needs- make physical education classes in schools more important. Behavioural modifications intended to bring about in learners through courses taught in today's schools are not limited to behaviours. The goals of all courses taught in schools include affective behaviours such as psychomotor development and personal traits, attitudes, values and interests beside cognitive behaviours such as knowledge and skills (9).

It was found in this research that the students creating positive metaphors about physical education course used the metaphors of entertainment (24.08%), game (12.04%) and sport (8.6%) most. Our findings in relation to the categories of metaphors offered by the students with positive perceptions of the course of physical education are supportive of the ones obtained in Koç (9), and they increase the importance of physical education classes in that they contribute to students

- Social development (17,2%)
- Physical development (18,92%)
- Psychological development (43,0%)
- Mental development (18,92%)

The metaphors associated with the most Psychological development (43,0%) was the one that

was used most frequently in this study (see Table 2). Casa et al.'s (17), a study of investigation of the effect of physical education and sports activities on psychological adaptation levels of children in "it can be significantly resulted from this research that physical education and sports activities might have positive effect on psychological adaptation levels of children" This is also a finding supportive of our finding.

The students with negative perceptions of the course believe that physical education classes are idle classes (see Table 3). The emergence of motor skills at early ages in childhood which provide physical, emotional and social benefits can help children to have a more active and more beneficial standard of living. Educators claim that children will have self-confidence thanks to the developing motor skills (1).

Sports games bring friendship feelings, cooperation, honesty, respect, obedience to rules and leadership behaviours to light; and also improve them (7).

The metaphor of entertainment was the one that was used most frequently (24.08) in this study (see Table 1). This is a finding parallel to the one obtained in Sofi (13), a study of metaphorical analysis of secondary school students' perceptions of physical education. In Tekin (15), it is stated that primary school students give a "yes" answer to the question "do you join physical education classes eagerly?". This is also a finding supportive of our finding.

In Sofi (13), the metaphors students used most were health, healthy life, liberty, mother, game and childhood. In the category of "physical education which is considered unnecessary", the students created four metaphors. The metaphor that the students used most in this category was "idle classes". The results obtained from that study- which was the first study of metaphors in relation to the course of physical education- are parallel to ours.

In conclusion, it is thought that secondary school students have understood the importance of physical education course and its connections with life, health, enjoyment, tranquillity, psychology and development.

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